



December 2002

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your interest in, and comments during the General Management Plan (GMP) scoping process at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (Lakeshore). In June many of you received Newsletter 4, which presented four alternatives, including the preliminary preferred alternative, for the future management of the Lakeshore. The newsletter also announced three open houses to allow the public to comment and ask questions about the alternatives and the planning process. Public interest was very high at the meetings on July 9, 10, and 11, and because there was not enough time for everyone to speak, an additional meeting was held on August 22. A total of almost 1,000 people attended the public meetings and to date we have received over 2,000 responses to the newsletter.

From the public meetings and comments, we heard the concerns of local citizens and groups about wilderness policies that may affect access, specifically vehicular access and the location of development including roads and parking lots. It is important to note that approximately 30,000 acres of the Lakeshore have been managed as wilderness for many years. Public Law 97- 361, a 1982 amendment to the Lakeshore's enabling legislation, directed the National Park Service to maintain the existing wilderness character of the areas identified in the *1981 Wilderness Recommendation*. Because of this law these areas have been, and will continue to be, managed as wilderness until it is changed by Congress. We regret we did not make this legal obligation more clear in Newsletter 4.

Numerous individuals and groups were concerned about the proposed management of non- native species in the preliminary preferred alternative, specifically the Coho salmon and the deer on North Manitou Island. We also heard from those who supported the preliminary preferred alternative. A number of commenters wanted us to maintain the traditional importance of recreation while ensuring that the natural wonders of the Lakeshore were not diminished. We also heard that most of the public is pleased with the current operation, facilities, and services of the Lakeshore.

On October 11, 2002, Paul Hoffman, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior, wrote to Congressmen Peter Hoekstra, Dave Camp, and Bart Stupak and stated that,

Following a preliminary review of the comments submitted during the comment period as well as those made during the public meeting on August 22, 2002, and based on the results of subsequent meetings with the National Park Service staff from the Lakeshore and the Midwest Region, it has been determined that the best course of action at this time is to withdraw the plan and cease GMP development processes for an undetermined period of time.

Prior to the Department's direction to stop working on the plan, preliminary analysis of the comments on Newsletter 4 gave us the following information. Of the 2,000 responses, about 800 pertained to the preliminary alternatives. About 32% supported the preliminary preferred alternative as written or could support it with some modifications; 68% could not support the preliminary preferred alternative. About 850 responses pertained to the land exchange between the National Park Service and The Homestead. Of this number, about 13% supported the land exchange and 87% were opposed (73% of the opposing group favored purchasing the property). Twelve out of the 2,000 responses mentioned stopping the plan. Many responses did not include comments on either the preliminary alternatives or the Homestead issue, but instead focused on other issues such as wilderness or roads. Although the planning process is not directed by vote, the above data would provide valuable information in developing a *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (GMP/EIS).

Had the planning process continued, it was our intent to revise the preliminary preferred alternative to reflect the concerns expressed during the comment period, especially those relating to Coho, deer on North Manitou Island, road access, beach access, and wilderness. These revisions would have been a part of the *Draft GMP/EIS* prepared for public review and comment.

The Lakeshore has on file and available for review, the public comments from Newsletter 4 and all previous GMP newsletters. We will maintain your name and address on our mailing list unless you notify us otherwise.

We want to express our appreciation for your thoughtful comments and your passionate concern to preserve and protect this very special place. We will continue to strive to meet each challenge to successfully fulfill the mission of the National Park Service and the Lakeshore. The public will be notified if/when the GMP is restarted or begun anew.

Sincerely,

Dusty Shultz
Superintendent

If you have any questions or comments at any time please contact us:

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